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AIR COMBAT COMMAND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT PROCESS TEAM SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

HQ Air Combat Command (ACC) demonstrated teamwork at its best by forming a successful Hazardous Materials Management Process (HMMP) Team. A diverse representation of command directorates, the group formed to create an ACC supplement to the new Air Force Instruction (AFI) on Hazardous Materials Management. With unique perspectives, each member expressed concerns over how ACC would best implement the processes and fulfill the objectives set forth in the AFI.

The challenge was to work together for the common goal of reducing hazardous material usage while accomplishing the Air Force mission, and with consideration to various organizational constraints. After obtaining everyone's buy-in to the overarching goal of hazardous material reduction, the team then agreed on the specific issues to address, identified potential solutions, negotiated the preferred solution, and then formulated command policy that was workable for every organization represented. The team emerged as a unified body with a strong Hazmart policy built upon genuine consensus.

BACKGROUND

In 1993, the Air Force mandated that its bases institute Hazmarts, or hazardous material pharmacies, for tracking, distributing, and controlling hazardous materials. A well-operated Hazmart reduces hazardous waste generated on a base and ensures that the hazardous materials used on a base are managed responsibly. The Hazmart concept brought environmentally positive changes to Air Force bases. However, since its inception, the Hazmart has been accompanied by confusion and misunderstanding. While bases were eager to reap the environmental benefits of the Hazmart, putting new practices in place created challenges. Bases lacked manpower, guidance, and funding. Consequently, Hazmart operations differed from base to base without firm direction or a standard approach.

On 1 August 1997 the Air Force issued AFI 32-7086, *Hazardous Materials Management*, that governs the management of hazardous materials. The AFI sought to standardize

responsibilities and procedures throughout the Air Force. We at ACC then sought to create a command-specific supplement to the AFI, and in the process resolve Hazmart problems and streamline operations while optimizing effectiveness and efficiency.

TEAM PROBLEM SOLVING

When ACC embarked on the task of supplementing the AFI, we were challenged to develop useful Hazmart guidance to the 18 ACC bases. Staff members from all the affected organizations agreed that the AFI left some Hazmart issues unresolved. With that understanding and in compliance with the AFI, the command formed their HMMP Team.

Our team's first order of business was to develop an HMMP Team Charter. This charter determined team membership (eight member and nine associate member organizations), meeting frequency (quarterly), and method of decision-making (consensus of membership). It established the team's key result area of reducing hazardous waste. The charter also created two subordinate working groups: 1) Hazmart/Sources of Supply Working Group, and 2) Hazardous Material Reduction Prioritization Process and Ozone Depleting Substance Management Working Group.

The next step was to obtain everyone's buy-in to one overarching goal: to control and reduce hazardous material usage and all its associated costs. This was fairly straight-forward due to the existing guidance in the AFI.

Pinpointing the most pressing problems to address first was the team's next task. The team decided to tackle the following issues: 1) How do we control hazardous material IMPAC (International Merchant Purchase Authorization Card) purchases? 2) How do we define free issue? 3) Who establishes ACC Hazmart policy? 4) How do we resolve decentralized versus partially decentralized Hazmart operation? This last issue was a result of the AFI stating the Air Force standard was a partially decentralized operation. ACC Supply preferred a decentralized operation and base Hazmarts were operating at various points on the spectrum between centralized, partially decentralized, and decentralized.

After reaching agreement on what the problems were, we then brainstormed all possible options for each problem. This was accomplished by maintaining an open mind and without criticizing or evaluating the proposed alternatives. The next step was to narrow the options list to those that were acceptable and doable. For example, if an option was totally unacceptable to one of the impacted organizations, or did not comply with the AFI, it was eliminated. Subsequently, the team objectively identified the pros and cons for each remaining alternative.

At this point, the team faced their biggest challenge: reaching consensus on the preferred solution to each problem. This was complicated by the internal goals of one organization sometimes conflicting with the internal goals of another organization. For example, Base Supply owns and operates the Hazmart, which is the base central focal point for hazardous materials, and supply provides most of the manpower for operating the Hazmart. Yet it is Civil Engineering (CE) who is responsible for the base's hazardous waste management and pays for all waste disposal, and proper control and management of hazardous materials greatly impacts the generation of hazardous waste. In addition, CE is dependent on the Hazmart for data in order to accomplish required environmental reporting. Consequently, CE has a serious stake in the effectiveness of the Hazmart operation. Yet supply was paying the Hazmart manpower bill, for the most part without any CE manpower, and supply was (and still is) in the midst of a major

downsizing effort. Putting an innovative, interdependent program into practice put cooperation skills to the test.

All four issues were resolved - the final product being a joint CE/Supply policy memorandum. This memorandum is a statement of ACC policy outlining each issue and providing coordinated, cross-functional direction. This was achieved by team members closely listening to each organization's perspective, understanding the various internal organizational limitations, conscientiously determining the intent of the AFI, and then creatively developing a compromise that was workable for all parties. This policy memorandum is a valuable tool for our ACC bases to operate a successful Hazmart program.

RESULTS

The resolution of the four issues addressed in the policy memorandum are:

1. *Free Issue* - The Hazmart will operate a free issue program as required by the AFI. The free issue area will accept unopened or partially filled hazardous material (HM) containers if it meets the following criteria: (1) is certified as uncontaminated by the original customer, (2) was originally issued by Supply or IMPAC purchase, (3) has at least six months remaining on its shelf life, (4) has more than one user, (5) has a readable label, and (6) has a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). The Hazmart supervisor may waive any of the above criteria. Other sources of supply, e.g., CEMAS, COPARS, MEDLOG, are responsible for managing their own free issue program.
2. *IMPAC Purchases* - We concluded that with internal controls, well-defined procedures, strict enforcement, and education and training, we can manage these purchases. The team developed the following rules:
 - a. HM IMPAC purchases will be restricted to a limited number of individuals in each unit who are "certified". Every squadron commander will authorize those in his/her unit to buy HM with the IMPAC. These individuals will receive additional IMPAC training and on completion of this training, they will receive certification to purchase HM. The unit environmental coordinator and safety representative will also work closely with these HM purchasers to ensure they are knowledgeable about what they are buying.
 - b. The Hazmart should be the first stop for the customer to initiate an AF Form 3952 (HM Authorization Form) and the user must obtain approval from Bioenvironmental Engineering (SGPB), CE, and Safety on the form. Electronic AF Form 3952s are the preferred method of submission and coordination. Electronic signatures are acceptable for the approval process. The Hazmart will enter the AF Form 3952 data into EMIS (Environmental Management Information System). After the HM is bought, the user will notify the Hazmart of what was purchased and the Hazmart will enter the transaction data into EMIS and provide the barcode number to the customer. It is not mandatory to actually place the barcode label on HM containers. When CEMAS and COPARS supply systems are used, those organizations (CE and Transportation) are responsible for ensuring an AF Form 3952 is completed and the form and transaction data are entered into EMIS. When MEDLOG supply system is used, SGPB will ensure HM purchases of non-medical items are entered into EMIS. The user is then responsible for "closing the loop" on their HM usage. The user will go to the nearest EMIS terminal to complete three EMIS data

fields (CSA number, Barcode number, Returned) to document what happened to the material. Until that step is done, they will not be authorized to purchase more of that HM.

c. Holders of the IMPAC permitted to buy HM will be held accountable for all HM purchases made with their card. If purchases are made that are not authorized, or are not reported to the Hazmart or other source of supply as required, appropriate penalties will be imposed. These penalties will be of sufficient consequence to prevent recurrence.

d. Properly educating HM IMPAC users on the procedures to follow, the importance of minimizing HM usage and reducing the number of different products purchased, is key to the success of this process.

3. *ACC Hazmart Policy* - In accordance with the AFI, the cross-functional ACC HMMP Team establishes Hazmart policy. All policy that impacts Hazmarts will be coordinated through this team.

4. *Decentralized or Partially Decentralized* - ACC will operate as partially decentralized in accordance with the AFI. There will be a separate facility known as the Hazmart, which consists of a HM storage area, a free issue area, and an office with EMIS terminals. It will provide a central point of control for HM users. However, the demand processing, stock control, receiving and delivery functions of supply need not be physically located in the Hazmart. The Air Force standard of a partially decentralized operation may be exceeded (i.e., be more centralized) if the installation provides the additional manpower required.

CONCLUSION

As a result of genuine teamwork, ACC's HMMP Team has set a standard for cooperative management in developing solutions to problems that are acceptable to all participants, regardless of various independent organizational goals and constraints. The team continues to improve hazardous material management command-wide. For the ACC 1998 Environmental Training Symposium, the HMMP Team developed a joint Hazmart briefing that provided clarification on additional issues of concern to our bases. The ACC Supplement to the AFI, which sparked the need for this entire process, is in final coordination with publication expected in Sep 98. This supplement further defines procedures, sets standards, and provides guidance for all ACC installations.

REFERENCES:

1. AFI 32-7086, *Hazardous Materials Management*
2. HQ ACC Hazmart Policy Memorandum, 22 Dec 97
3. Draft ACC Supplement 1 to AFI 32-7086